

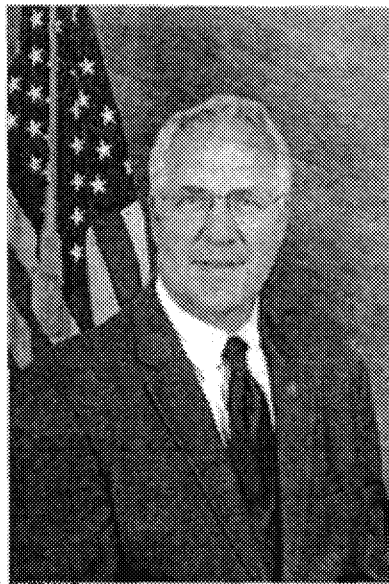
Opinion

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Guest View: Say adieu to the Paris Agreement

John Shimkus Guest View 12 hrs ago



Shimkus

Like much of the previous administration's climate legacy, the Paris Agreement never had the support it would need to become the law of the land. Neither executive agreements nor executive actions are a substitute for legislation or treaties, and neither the deal itself nor the Obama Administration's policies stemming from it were supported by the majority of Congress.

As Congress continues to work with President Donald Trump and Environmental Protection Agency Administrator Scott Pruitt to roll back those rules and regulations through a combination of legislative and administrative actions, the United States should consider exiting the Paris Agreement as well. By doing so, it would be made clear that we will not sacrifice our jobs, affordable electricity, and economic competitiveness.

The fact is, America's global leadership will not be harmed by exiting the agreement — an agreement we arguably never fully opted into in the first place. On the contrary, bidding adieu to the Paris Agreement would demonstrate to our friends and foes alike that the United States government is bound not by the wishes of one administration, but by the will of the people.

It's also time to be realistic about the agreement itself. The truth is that even if the United States stopped 100 percent of our carbon dioxide emissions tomorrow, it would make little difference in international climate projections. Former Secretary of State John Kerry even conceded, in Paris no less, that "if all the industrial nations went down to zero emissions — remember what I just said, all the industrial emissions went down to zero emissions — it wouldn't be enough" to alter global temperatures to the degree demanded by the environmental left.

My friends on the other side of this debate counter that more than 600 companies — including some of the largest multinational corporations — have urged the United States to remain in the agreement, and that staying somehow gives the U.S. more leverage in what is supposedly a voluntary deal. But there are a few holes in both those assertions.

The first is obvious. If any one of those companies wished to take actions within the scope of their business that they believe will improve the Earth's environment, nothing in the Paris Agreement or any existing U.S. law prevents them from doing so. No corporation should need permission from the federal government to reduce their emissions.

The second is less easy to see. While voluntary, national commitments made under the agreement may not be enforced by the international community, Big Green groups may attempt to seek enforcement of President Obama's promises in a U.S. court. Whether they succeed or not, the litigation would waste EPA's time and resources that would be better spent on their core, congressionally-mandated functions.

For these reasons and more, President Trump should heed his advisers urging him to leave the Paris Agreement. And Congress and the administration should continue to work together to bring the power back to the people and the states — putting the consumer first, focusing on creating good paying, American jobs, and capitalizing on our nation's energy abundance.

Congressman John Shimkus represents the 15th Congressional District of Illinois.

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